

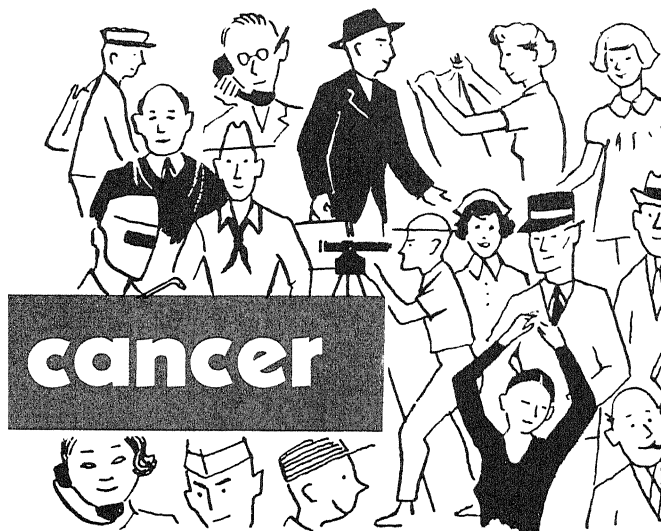


**what to know**

**what to do about it**



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE**  
Public Health Service      National Institutes of Health



### **early discovery—**

Half of all cancers start in parts of the body that can be examined easily by a doctor during an ordinary office visit.

### **and early treatment—**

Even considering the recent advancements of medical research, the best weapon against cancer still is early diagnosis followed by prompt treatment by a qualified physician.

### **offer the greatest hope**

You may believe that cancer is an altogether hopeless disease. Medical science has proved otherwise.

Early diagnosis and adequate treatment usually improve the outlook for a person with cancer.

Do not hesitate to ask your doctor about suspicious signs. If you develop cancer, prompt treatment can save your life.

## **what is cancer?**

Each of the billions of cells that make up your body has a special job—skin cells give protection, red blood cells carry oxygen, bone cells build the skeleton. These cells multiply rapidly during childhood, but after you reach maturity they divide and reproduce themselves only to replace worn-out tissues or to repair wounds. Cancer cells seem to be runaway cells that multiply rapidly and without purpose. The cancer growth takes food needed by the normal cells, invades healthy tissues, and spreads to other parts of the body. The patient can be cured only by removal or destruction of all cancer cells.

## **what causes cancer?**

*Is cancer contagious?*

No; you cannot “catch” cancer from another person.

*Is cancer hereditary?*

It is generally believed that parents do not pass cancer on to their children, but physicians occasionally find that two or more members of a family may develop the same type of cancer.

Medical science still does not know how the change from a normal to an abnormal cell takes place, but research has produced important information about the causes of some forms of cancer. Cigarette smoking has been identified as the major cause of lung cancer. Other cancer hazards include repeated or prolonged exposure to sunlight or to X-rays, to the fumes of certain industrial chemicals, and possibly to polluted air.

## when and where cancer appears

Cancer appears most frequently in men and women over 35, but younger people and sometimes even babies are affected.

Cancer can develop in any part of the body. The chart below indicates the numbers of cases of cancer in various body sites to be expected among each 100 cases of cancer in men and women.

MEN	SITE	WOMEN
4	lips, mouth	1
5	stomach	3
15	intestines, rectum	16
1	liver	2
14	lungs	3
0	breast	22
9	kidneys, bladder	4
17	skin	13
2	brain	1
—	uterus (womb)	16
11	prostate	—
22	other	19
100		100

## cancer treatment

Science knows three ways to arrest and, in some instances, cure cancer:

1. *Surgery* removes cancer growths and nearby tissues that may contain cancer cells.
2. *Radiation* from X-rays and radioactive elements destroys cancer cells.
3. *Chemotherapy*, or treatment with drugs, sometimes completely, though temporarily, relieves symptoms and shrinks tumors when other types of treatment are of no benefit.

Research on combinations of these three methods is continuously going on in an effort to increase the effectiveness of treatment. Safer, more effective surgery, improved radiation techniques, and better use of drugs constantly improve the outlook for cancer patients.

## beware of quack treatments!

Useless treatments by diets or other means, offered by quacks, seriously endanger the lives of cancer patients. Modern surgery, radiation, and drug treatment, singly or in combination, are effective against different types of cancer. Thanks to improved methods of detection, cancer often is discovered in an early, localized stage when treatment may be curative.

## **possible signs of cancer**

- ▶ 1. Unusual bleeding or discharge.
  - ▶ 2. A lump or thickening in the breast or elsewhere.
  - ▶ 3. A sore that does not heal.
  - ▶ 4. Change in bowel or bladder habits.
  - ▶ 5. Hoarseness or cough.
  - ▶ 6. Indigestion or difficulty in swallowing.
  - ▶ 7. Change in a wart or mole.
- 
- If your symptom lasts longer than 2 weeks, go to your doctor to find out if it means cancer.
  - Don't wait for symptoms to become painful. Pain is not an early cancer sign.

## **what you can do about cancer**

You can protect yourself and your family by knowing possible signs of cancer and reporting any of these to your doctor immediately. In addition, every person should have a complete physical examination at least once a year.

You can avoid those habits known to lead to the development of cancer—cigarette smoking and excessive exposure to sunlight as in long and frequent sunbathing.

You can support the efforts of doctors and health workers by assisting with community cancer programs and in guarding against such health hazards as air and water pollution.

Through annual appropriation of funds by Congress, the National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health conducts research and provides grant and contract support of cancer research and training in many non-Federal institutions. This support has contributed in no small measure to increased understanding of the cancer problem in recent years, and the improvement in the various approaches to cause, prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

**Other publications available:**

	PHS No.	HIS No.
Cancer Cause and Prevention	959	
Danger: The Cancer Quacks	...	
Treating Cancer	690	
Drugs vs. Cancer	1652	
Cancer of the Bladder		145
Cancer of the Bone		110
Cancer of the Breast		81
Cancer of the Colon and Rectum		124
Cancer of the Larynx		122
Cancer of the Lung		115
Cancer of the Mouth		132
Cancer of the Prostate		127
Cancer of the Skin		75
Cancer of the Stomach		120
Cancer of the Uterus		109
Leukemias, Lymphomas, and Multiple Myeloma		144

**You can obtain further information  
about cancer by writing to the Research  
Information Branch, National Cancer  
Institute, National Institutes of Health,  
Bethesda, Md. 20014**

**Public Health Service Publication No. 375  
Health Information Series No. 76  
Revised 1969**

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